

THE SSA NEWS

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Coming Soon!

- Thanksgiving Holiday, November 28 and 29, 2002
- Operation Santa Claus Store Opens for All Donations, and Agency Shopping Begins, December 2, 2002



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR A Comment on Aging

Having reached the point where I am now eligible for some senior citizen retail prices, and having had to step in and manage my 90-year-old father's affairs and care after he suffered a fall and a stroke in August, I have been thinking a lot about the aging process, getting old and related issues.

We know that our Adult Services programs are seeing increasing numbers of vulnerable older adults relying on SSA for protection and care. We know the demographic trends forecast a significant growth in our aging population in the next few years. And, here I am on a personal basis, dealing more and more with issues of aging.

It is no wonder then, that a newspaper column sent to me by Dianne Edwards, Director of Social Services in Sonoma County, and a SSA graduate, fascinated me. It is a column by Shirlee Zane in the Santa Rosa, California newspaper. She happens to be the Executive Director of the Sonoma County Council on Aging. The column was headlined "The Changing Face of Aging." A few sentences from that column really struck me, and I wanted to share them with you.

"As one ages, the harsh reality is that we lose the health of our youth."

"Betty Davis said it well – Old age is no place for sissies."

"People who may no longer have something to give us due to their age and health may not be productive, but they do not cease having worth."

"The presence of the elderly among us who may no longer be productive reminds us of our common humanity and need for one another."

The next time you encounter an elderly person, whether that encounter is positive or negative, remember these thoughts and give that person a helping hand if the opportunity arises. You will feel much better for doing so.

SSA Video Library Now Open!

We welcome you to SSA's new video library. The library has been created to provide you with convenient access to social services information. You will find a collection of 76 videos housed at 888 North Main, Santa Ana in Room 1028, and an index which includes a brief synopsis of topics. You will also find the index posted on the Intranet by clicking on Administration, Economic and Community Partnerships, Links. Some of the videos are derived from trainings, television news

programs, colleges and conferences.

Topics include welfare reform, the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Support program, foster and adoptive recruiting efforts, child abuse, elder abuse, immigration, Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, services for children and families, political viewpoints, homelessness, and more. The videos are dated from 1980 to the present time.

If you are interested in checking out a video, please contact Sylvia Almazán, SSA



Economic and Community Partnerships at 245-6274, Or via e-mail at Sylvia. Almazan@ssa.ocgov.com. If you would like to add to the library by sharing a video that may be educational or of interest to the Agency as a whole, please have your manager review it. If it is approved, send the video to Sylvia. We hope you will find the library helpful and informative.

"Weekly conference calls have started with CitiCorp and with other counties that will also implement EBT in February."



Electronic Benefit Transfer Updates



Since June 2002, four SSA workgroups have been meeting on a biweekly basis and will continue to do so until EBT is implemented. The EBT Conversion, Operations and Training group (COT), along with TCD and district staff recently conducted EBT overview training. The training was a great success with a high percentage of staff participation. The EBT Communications workgroup mailed the second EBT notices

to clients on November 1, along with a letter to landlords notifying them about the new benefit availability dates for cash clients. The CBO presentation on EBT took place on October 29, with 74 participants in attendance. In addition, the EBT Tech/Net workgroup is in the testing stage, running files back and forth with Citicorp, the EBT vendor. Weekly conference calls have started with CitiCorp and with other counties that will also implement EBT in February. The

EBT Finaccess workgroup will receive the final draft of the Cash Access Plan this month. In addition to the accomplishments of these groups, subgroups are continuing to meet to work on policies and procedures, data scrubbing of case information and site preparation. For more information, please contact Pam Miller at 541-7713 or Lidia Sanchez 541-7885.

"The highlight of the fair was the educational sessions where prospective adoptive parents could learn more..."

Third Annual Adoption Fair a Great Success!

On October 27, the Orange County Adoption Consortium presented the third annual Adoptions Fair. The event was held at the Garden Grove Community Center and was well attended by parents who have adopted children, and prospective adoptive parents. The highlight of the fair was the educational sessions where prospective adoptive parents

could learn more about pre/post adoption resources, adopting a special needs child, and adopting through concurrent planning. A panel of adoptees were on hand to discuss their experiences and to answer questions. Consortium participants set up booths to provide information about their adoption agencies, and SSA Adoptions hosted a booth. A

reporter from the Orange County Register attended the fair and interviewed Raquel Amezcua of SSA Adoptions and two adoptive families. Both families had adopted special needs children, and the article was a heartfelt portrayal of these families' lives.

Tony Rodella Retires After 27 Years with SSA

Antonio Rodella began his employment with the County of Orange, on May 7, 1976. For the last 27 years he worked throughout the Social Services Agency, specializing in such Programs as Medi-Cal, General Relief, AFDC/Food Stamps and most recently a Social Services Supervisor I in CalWORKs Program. He is recognized for his valuable contributions, achievements, and many have benefited from his positive views regarding communication, achievement

and highest levels of performance in the community.

Tony was an active member of the OCEA/LMC since its formation in February 1999. He participated on several committees, was selected as the Lead Labor Mediator, and served as the OCEA SSA Team Leader during 2001/2002.

He was a member of OCEA's Board of Directors and held the position of Insurance Officer. He was a valued associate of

OCEA's Executive Committee and his service will be missed.

Tony is planning on enjoying his time being a grandfather, traveling, and focusing on wood working projects.

We appreciate what a great opportunity we had working with Tony. It has been a wonderful adventure and a truly gratifying experience having him as part of our team. We wish Tony the best of luck in his new endeavors in life.

Orange County Not Getting Its Fair Share of State Resources

By Larry Leaman

Proposition 13 shifted taxing and revenue authority to the State of California. The State's funding formulas do not reflect Orange County's present funding needs. At the time that Prop 13 was passed, Orange County had barely one million residents. Today, we are pushing three million. Back then, we had a heavy agricultural base, requiring lower job skills. Now, it's just the opposite! Back then, we had fewer human services needs in a mostly rural county.

Today we have extensive needs in an urbanized, high-density county. Orange County sends much more tax revenue to Sacramento than it gets back. Of the 58 counties in California, Orange is dead last in the per capita amount of property tax it gets back from the State. When you compare the level of human services provided by Orange County to the level provided by other counties, you are comparing us to counties that get to keep and spend our money. The

demographic and poverty trends highlighted in the 8th Annual Report on the Condition of Children in Orange County, 2002, should be a wake-up call to the State elected representatives that we send to Sacramento and to everyone in the Legislature. They should start by recognizing that 1978 State funding formulas do not represent 2002 realities!

"Orange County sends much more tax revenue to Sacramento than it gets back."

SSA Team Wins in United Way Jeopardy Competition!

Congratulations to the Social Services Agency Jeopardy Champions! Never let it be said that SSA does not have skills and knowledge beyond compare! As part of the United Way Campaign, the Health Care Agency hosted a Jeopardy Tournament and challenged SSA to compete. Being sure of our place in history, we volunteered to recruit a team to compete. The SSA

Team was headed by Ang Doti, and had as additional members Dick Antopol (Family Self-Sufficiency), Stacy Lee (Adult Services), John LaRoche (Economic and Community Partnerships) and Roy Lipshin (Training and Career Development). There were also teams from the Health Care Agency, Probation and the Community Services Agency in the tournament. The

competition was fierce, and there was a tricky question about the juniper berry, but our team represented us well and pulled it off. We won by a wide margin (400 points) and this made us all proud! It was a lot of fun and all in the name of a good cause, The United Way.

Congratulations to the team and to SSA!

"The competition was fierce..."

Condolences

It is with much sadness that we report the passing of Margaret Primm, a former SSA employee. Margaret began her County career in 1973. She was a long time employee who worked in a variety of

assignments, most recently as an Social Services Supervisor I at West Regional Center in Medi-Cal. She retired in July 2000.

Although Margaret had been

suffering from a long term illness, her actual death was unexpected. Sincere condolences go out to her family and friends.

Eligibility Professionals Recognition Events: Creative and Fun!

The Anaheim Regional Centre's (ARC) Eligibility Professionals recognition event may have been a low budget affair, but there was a wealth of talent and creativity.

Supervisors and administrative staff put on a dazzling show complete with song and dance, and Munchkins! The theme was the Wizards of ARC! Dialog and lyrics told the story of a dedicated team and what makes a difference in our community. Dorothy and her three pals concluded that it takes great "brains, courage and heart" to perform at the level of ARC staff.

"Dialog and lyrics told the story of a dedicated team and what makes a difference in our community."

"Somewhere over the Rainbow."



"The Wizards of ARC!"



"A Star Spangled Salute from Hoover Office."

Meanwhile, with flags flying proudly, CalWORKs-West Regional Centre celebrated Eligibility Professional Recognition on October 9 at Hoover and on October 10 at Chip. Their theme, "Star Spangled Salute...To Everyday Heroes," recognized West staff, who every day make a difference in the lives of the people they serve.

At Santa Ana Regional Center (SARC), they chose a theme of a red, white and blue country picnic. On September 19, 2002, staff was welcomed into a cheerful room, which was decorated with tablecloths, flowers, and American flags. The supervisors, all wearing big smiles, were on hand to welcome everyone. A barbecue was enjoyed by all. After the food was served, Patsy Calvert, Phyllis Watanabe, and Pauline Notch offered warm congratulatory speeches, and the supervisors sang a song. Written to the tune of, "It's a Grand Old Flag" this ditty, "You're a Grand Old Bunch," showed SARC staff how very much they are appreciated.

Congratulations to all Eligibility Professionals for the good work that you do!



As the holiday season approaches, we find ourselves thinking of our families and friends, and looking forward to playing "Santa." Most of us realize there are children and seniors in Orange County who, for many different reasons, will be forgotten. We would like to invite you to join us by becoming one of Operation Santa Claus's honorary "Santas."

Operation Santa Claus began in 1962 as a small holiday project to provide gifts for a

few hundred children in low-income families. In 1975, the newly formed Orange County Social Services Agency assumed responsibility for the program, and that year over 630 children were served. As the need for this service expanded, so did the program. In 1992, agencies throughout the County formed the Operation Santa Claus Board with the goal of reaching even more children and also including some of the needy seniors and disabled people in Orange County. In 2001,

Operation Santa Claus was able to provide gifts for over 35,000 children and nearly 1,100 seniors and disabled clients.

If you were one of our supporters last year, we wish to express our sincere gratitude, and we hope you join us again this year.

To those of you who would like to join this outstanding group of donors and volunteers, please call Cheryl Smith at (714) 825-3159 or e-mail Cheryl.Smith@ssa.ocgov.com.

"The holiday season never feels as good as when we are sharing with those who need help."

Senior Santa and Friends

Senior Santa & Friends is a part of the Operation Santa Claus program and provides special request items and generic gifts to low income Orange County residents who are elderly or severely disabled. The individuals are clients of the Social Services and Health Care Agencies. Each year, staff identify clients who would benefit from having such things as household appliances, special medical equipment, or other items which would make life easier, more comfortable or more independent.

What can you do to help?

- **Donate gift certificates.** Gift certificate donations are very much appreciated and offer our clients the freedom and independence to purchase items, such as medicines, books, bandages, cotton socks, toothpaste and soap. Because their income only covers the barest essentials, our clients are often unable to afford even the most minor purchases, which would make their lives more comfortable.
- **Sponsor an "Angel Tree."** "Angel Tree" gift tags are provided to organizations, businesses, schools and families who are interested in collecting gifts and/or donations. These tags provide gift suggestions for a senior or disabled adult who is in need of a gift from Santa.
- **Adopt an elderly or disabled adult.** Special requests are often received from our clients. If you are interested in filling a very special need, please consider adopting an elderly or disabled adult.

For more information, please call the Senior Santa & Friends Coordinator, Tania Harnden, at (714) 825-3111 or e-mail Tania.Harnden@ssa.ocgov.com.

All donations are tax deductible.

"What can you do to help? Donate gift certificates, sponsor an Angel Tree, adopt an elderly or disabled adult."

An Early Trick or Treat

Imagine a room full of well wishers, a table laden with gifts, a beautiful pink and white cake but no guest of honor. This was the scene at the Main Street office on October 30, when much to everyone's surprise, Ruth Jasso-Haile wasn't able to make her own baby shower. Instead, Ruth was in the hospital giving birth to her first baby, a beautiful

daughter named Cinzia. Cinzia came into the world three weeks earlier than expected at 12:41 p.m., weighing 5 lbs. 4 ounces, 17 inches long and sporting a full head of dark hair! Most of us know Ruth as the former secretary to retired Chief Deputy Director Bob Griffith. These days Ruth is working at Eckhoff in Children and Family Services. It is with

pleasure that we report that Ruth, her husband, and Cinzia are all doing well. This was indeed a wonderful treat. All of her gifts were brought to the hospital after work. Congratulations to Ruth and family!





KUDOS

We welcome your input regarding this newsletter. For information on submitting articles, contact Debbie Kroner at (714) 541-7734
Deborah.Kroner@ssa.ocgov.com
or
Sylvia Almazán at
(714) 245-6274
Sylvia.Almazan@ssa.ocgov.com

Larry Leaman, Publisher
Debbie Kroner, Editor
Sylvia Almazán, Assoc. Editor

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- * Articles for the December issue of the SSA News are due to Debbie by December 2, 2002!
- * Please limit your articles to 225 words maximum. Thank you for your story!

Cherry Zeigler, Senior Social Worker, SSA/Children and Family Services, Integrated Continuing Services Program III. "Mrs. Linda Elizalde, Senior Social Services Supervisor, I am writing this letter to inform you that a case person, named Cherry Zeigler, was a caregiver for my two grandsons for two years. We had nothing but good care from Ms. Zeigler at that time. She did her job far and beyond her duty. We were always informed on everything, she responded to our requests promptly. As far as I am concerned she was an excellent case worker. She will be missed. Thank you." (From a letter sent by a client, submitted by Tuey Lee, Program Manager, CFS/Integrated Continuing Services III.)

Economic & Community Partnerships/Community-Based Organization Meeting. "I'd like to thank you and your staff for inviting the Department of Child Support Services to host the community-based organization training on September 24, 2002. I appreciate the effort and support from your diligent staff in making the presentation a success. The event provided an excellent opportunity for our department to introduce itself as a separate agency to the Orange County community. I look forward to a continued partnership with your agency. Again, thank you for this wonderful opportunity, and please keep us in mind for future events." (Sent by Jan C. Sturla, Director of Child Support Services, forwarded by Larry Leaman, Director, Social Services Agency.)

Anthony Rabago, Eligibility Technician, Adult Services & Assistance Programs/General Relief/Food Stamps. "Thank you so much for your personal attention to the case of my brother. You are a kind and compassionate man and your efforts on our behalf made a difficult situation easier to deal with. My brother and I feel fortunate to have been able to handle this with you. Best Wishes." (Sent by a client's sister, submitted by Mary Wuerfl, Deputy Director, ASAP/Admin.)

Judy Baca, Social Services Supervisor I, Admin/Program Integrity. "I want to thank you for the outstanding effort put forth by Judy Baca, one of the trainers in the Food Stamp Quality Control (QC) Refresher Training. Judy's presentation dealt with QC documentation, narration, and verification which was well received. We are all striving to reduce Food Stamp error rates, and activities such as the Refresher Training will help ensure that the information obtained from the case reviews is of highest quality. Your county's commitment to this effort, as shown by your staff's participation, is greatly appreciated. Thank you." (Sent by Joeana Carpenter, Chief, CalWORKs and Food Stamps, Data Systems Design Task Force, submitted by Fred Branca, Director, SSA/Admin.)

SSA Special Thanks

Thank you United Way Committee Members for all of your hard work and all employees who provided their generous support and participation in helping to make this year's United Way Campaign yet another huge success!